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Translating Schubert's *Winterreise*: Sense and Singability

The activity of song translation is not only of scholarly interest in the field of musicology, but also aids translation studies because of the focus it places on the relationship between linguistic content and form. Moreover, translating such canonical works as Schubert's lieder provides a rich, multidimensional perspective on such adjacent topics as cultural history, comparative literature and even international relations. Whereas choices faced by poetic translators typically involve the unavoidable contest between faithfulness to the semantic content of the source text and preservation of its poetic form, translators who wish their texts to be sung must resolve this contest by following the primary criterion of singability. In this article a discussion of the choices faced by a contemporary English translator of Wilhelm Müller's poems set by Schubert in his song cycle *Winterreise* is presented in terms of singability and intelligibility.

Keywords: adaptation, translation intelligibility, melisma, prosodic-musical alignment, rhythmic substitution, singability, syllabism, song translation, translation of Schubert's lieder.

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«Зимний путь» Шуберта: вопросы адекватности перевода поэтического текста

Вопросы перевода песен представляют интерес не только для исследователей в области музыкальной науки, но и для тех, кто занимается проблемами переводоведения. Это связано прежде всего с тем, что основу перевода песни составляет изучение сложных отношений между языковым содержанием текста и его формой. Перевод таких канонических произведений, как песни Шуберта, не может осуществляться вне богатого, многоаспектного контекста истории культуры, литературы и даже межнациональных взаимодействий. Тогда как переводчики поэтических произведений всегда стремятся найти компромисс между точностью семантической репрезентации текста оригинала и сохранением его поэтической формы, переводчики песен должны руководствоваться критерием «сингабельности», то есть возможностью текста быть спетым под музыку. Автор данной статьи, переводчик текстов музыкальных произведений на английский язык, рассматривает проблемы перевода песенного цикла Франца Шуберта на стихи Вильгельма Мюллера с точки зрения принципов сингабельности и адекватности перевода.

Ключевые слова: адаптация, точность перевода, мелизм, просодико-музыкальное выравнивание, ритмическое замещение, сингабельность, силлабизм, перевод песен, перевод песен Шуберта.

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Introduction

In setting out to produce his own contemporary English version of Müller's poems set by Schubert in his *Winterreise* (the premiere of which was performed by him together with pianist Alexander Polyakov under the title "Winter Journeyman" on 19 April 2018 at Ekaterinburg's Dom Muzyki), the singer-translator, who is the author of this article, sought to develop a work that could be maximally understandable to contemporary audiences, remove perceived barriers to enjoyment of 'serious' vocal music, and at the same time preserve as much of the sense and flavour of the original German version as possible [20].

Although in many ways similar to the author's previous attempts of poetical translation, one of the additional challenges presented by *Winterreise* consisted in the striking domination of Müller's text by Schubert's music. While Wilhelm Müller was a well-known and even popular poet during his time [14; 15], it is doubtful if he would be so widely celebrated today were it not for Schubert's musical settings of his poems [18; 19]. And, despite the wonderful perceptivity of Schubert's music to the overall mood of Müller's *Die Winterreise*, his setting assimilates the German verse in ways that present particular challenges to the translator who aims to be faithful to both the music and the text.

Form and Content

In discussing Schubert's choice to remove the definite article from the title of Müller's poetic cycle¹, Ian Bostridge observes that the composer did two things:

First, he made the work his own, something distinct from its originating material and owing no loyalty to it beyond the use he could make of it in moulding it to his own purposes. Secondly, he made it more abstract, less definite, more open – without its definite article – and, from our perspective, more modern. *Winterreise* has a starkness which is utterly true to its material in a way that *Die Winterreise* would not be. Anyone can own this journey [2].

In moulding (*Die*) *Winterreise* to the present author's own purposes, chiefly in terms of preserving its singability, it was determined that wherever Schubert's rhythmic and phraseological structures diverged from those of the original poet, it would be necessary to give priority to the music. This resulted in a number of critical choices, the implications of which will be discussed in detail later. However,

in setting out to **translate** Schubert's *Winterreise* into English, it was accepted from the outset that not all of the problems would be solvable in formal terms alone. In this connection, to the extent that a poetical text is presented as a 'translation', one cannot disagree with Derek McCulloch's statement that "...fidelity of content is, and must be, the sine qua non" even if sometimes "...for all our efforts, that may not be the case" [13, p. 12]. In terms of such fidelity (and associated ethical issues concerning the "rights of the original songwriters" and/or "risk of misleading audiences"), Peter Low accepts that compromises and interchanges in song translation "are not optional but essential." Discussing the choices made by Eric Blau and Mort Shuman when they wrote the Broadway show *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, which presented musical works by the Belgian singer-songwriter in English, Low distinguishes between song **translations** (in which there is "extensive transfer of material from the source text, with a reasonably high degree of semantic fidelity, particularly with respect to its main features"), **adaptations** (where there may be "extensive and significant departures from the semantic fidelity") and **replacement texts** (defined as song lyrics "created to be used with a pre-existing melody, yet manifesting no semantic transfer from the text previously sung to that melody") [11, p. 231].

The Criterion of Singability

In discussing the question of **singability**, Low cites Richard Dyer-Bennet – the legendary 20th century folk singer and translator of Schubert-Müller's other great song cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin* – as having formulated the following four guidelines:

1. The target text must be singable – otherwise any of the other virtues it may have are meaningless.
2. The target text must sound as if the music had been fitted to it, even though it was actually composed to fit the source text.
3. The rhyme-scheme of the original poetry must be kept because it gives shape to the phrases.
4. Liberties must be taken with the literal meaning of the text when the first three requirements cannot otherwise be met [10, p. 91].

In endorsing these guidelines, it may be added that in order to be able to perform a song with conviction, a singer must completely assimilate its text, not only making it his or her own, but also, in so doing, essentially **becoming** the narrator and/

or character. In practical terms, this process of assimilation requires the singer to commit the song's text and music entirely to memory. Here, when discussing memory, it is necessary to emphasise that one does not refer to the simple retrieval of information from grey matter, as a computer might read from a hard drive – or even to muscle memory alone [2] – but rather to a whole complex of intricately interconnected mnemonic resources, including the precise repetitive coordination of breath, gesture, organs of articulation, musical cues, other cues in the external environment, emotional responses (including those in real-time from a live audience), etc. Evidently, it is much easier to commit a text to memory if that text is in the singer's native language – and considerably easier again if the singer is the author or translator of that text. Nevertheless, all other things being equal, some texts are easier to memorise – and, at the same time, more 'singable' – than others: the criterion of 'singability' appears to largely coincide with W. H. Auden's definition of poetry as "memorable language" [1].

What is it, then, that makes a translated text singable / memorable? According to the Russian Acmeist poet Nikolay Gumilev, the nine formal elements which must be preserved by a translator of poetry are:

(1) the number of lines, (2) meter and measure, (3) the alternation of rhymes, (4) the character of enjambment, (5) the character of rhymes, (6) the linguistic register, (7) the metaphor type, (8) special devices and (9) transitions of tone [5].

Rhythmic substitution

It is important to note here that the preservation of meter and measure does not necessarily imply equality of syllable count. In other words, singability may be preserved or even enhanced when bridging phraseological differences between source and target languages by using rhythmic substitutions, which may either be analysed in terms of metrical feet² or musical tuplets³: e.g., in prosodic terms, iambs and trochees may be doubled, halved or substituted by anapests or dactyls; in musical terms, duplets may be substituted by triplets or quadruplets; or vice versa. This process may also result in a masculine rhyme⁴ being substituted by a feminine rhyme⁵, or vice versa. In musical terms, these substitutions may also give rise to an anacrusis⁶. McCulloch's observation that

in many poems a rhyme scheme a-b-a-b occurs. In practice, by making the b-rhyme the dominant rhyme

and adopting an a-b-c-a scheme, a more natural flow can be achieved, without having audibly deviated from the original form [13, p. 11]

may also present a useful additional qualification of Gumilev's rules for Acmeist poetry.

In his discussion of singability, Peter Low drily notes that singable translations have been attempted and used with sufficient frequency that the task has been "given some legitimacy" and that the making of such translations is consequently "valid, at least sometimes." At the same time, he acknowledges some sympathy for the view – held especially strongly with respect to German Romantic lieder – that "singing songs in translation is a bad idea." Two reasons suggested for this are "the strong claim of the original language: only the source text offers the actual words set by the composer, with all their phonic features such as rhymes and vowel-sounds, and of course their integral meaning" and "the defective nature of most target texts," which are "often marred by forced rhymes and unnatural language, so that performers simply cannot sing them with conviction." singable translations per se <...> arguments based on a few unsuccessful examples do not constitute valid objections to singable translations per se" [10, p. 88].

Intelligibility of the Sung Language The Prosodic-Musical Alignment of Stress

Johnson et al. empirically investigated the hypothesis that stress-matched sung stimuli are likely to be more intelligible than their stress-mismatched equivalents. In other words, since stress in English may be used to distinguish minimal pairs of lexical items, e.g. CON-tent (n.) and con-TENT (v., adj.), and pairs of syllables in words or phrases may exhibit either a trochaic (DUM-da) rhythm or an iambic (da-DUM) rhythm, the extent to which these patterns are aligned with musical stresses (e.g. beats 1 and 3 are naturally stressed in a 4/4 bar) in any setting of a text to music will result in a reinforcement of the text's prosodic rhythm by the musical rhythms. The results of the study strongly confirmed the hypothesis that prosodic-musical stress alignment increases the intelligibility of sung language [9].

Melisma versus Syllabism

In its long development from mediaeval plainchant to lieder and beyond, the overall tendency in Western vocal music for composers to take a less melismatic⁷ approach to setting text and a

corresponding trend towards more syllabic⁸ settings may be observed. The results of an empirical study investigating the intelligibility of sung texts supported the hypothesis that the greater the number of notes assigned to a syllable, the less likely the sung text is to be intelligible to an audience [9]. Nevertheless, melisma continues to be a feature of contemporary western vocal styles, especially as popularised by Whitney Houston, whose use of the technique – e.g. in the Dolly Parton song *I will always love you* – has influenced a whole generation of popular singers including Beyonce, Christina Aguilera and Jennifer Hudson. However, many critics have taken issue with the subsequent “overuse” of melisma, noting Houston’s good taste in saving melisma “for just the right moment”, e.g. in accentuating every ‘I’ and ‘you’ in a song whose emotionality is structured around an interpersonal relationship [4].

In attempting to translate (*Die Winterreise*) into English, the present author aimed to limit the departures from the prosodic meter and measure of Müller’s verses to those specific cases where Schubert had already done so. Moreover, in order to increase the intelligibility of the sung text [9], as well as to increase the contemporary feel of the text, the choice was repeatedly taken to reduce Schubert’s melismatic tendency in English where it was possible to do so while remaining reasonably faithful to Müller’s poetic sense. Thus, for example, while in *Die Wetterfahne* Schubert uses nine musical notes to set the word *aufgestecktes* (two for the first syllable, one for the second, four for the third and two for the fourth), in “The Weathervane” it turned out to be possible to achieve a much lower note/syllable ratio without providing any significant disturbances to Schubert’s music.

Example 1 Op. 89, D 911, No. 2

J = 80



You fool not to no-tice be-fore that the spite-ful e - scat - cheon affixed to the tow - er... was... fake!
 Er häßt... es e-ber be-mer - ken sol-len, des Hau - ses auf - ge - steck - tes... Schild.

Melisma certainly holds its place in “Weathervane,” however, especially when the music conveys the emotion of rising indignation.

Example 2 Op. 89, D 911, No. 2

J = 80



The toy of a spoilt... braut... con - cei - ted and proud?
 ihr Kind... ist ei - ne... rei - tet und che Braut.

Again, in Rast, where Schubert’s music has stretched Müller’s prosodic meter in applying two notes per syllable in the phrase *Rücken fühlte keine Last*, in “Respite” it was possible to apply a 1:1 note-to-syllable ratio without reducing Müller’s semantic meaning (the legitimacy or otherwise of *expanding* Müller’s semantic meaning will be discussed in detail later in this essay).

Example 3 Op. 89, D 911, No. 10

J = 50



my shoul - ders by my knap - sack strap were ne - ver o - ver stressed;
 Der Rü - cken - fühl - te - kei - ne - Laßt.

However, in a pivotal section of “Dream of Spring” (*Frühlingstraum*), the opposite principle was applied. Since melismatic singing is often interpreted as suggesting “heightened emotion” [22], it seems clear that Schubert used the technique here in order to create just such an emotional effect. Thus, in English translation, where the words ‘mêlée’ and ‘delight’ respectively refer to the chirruping of songbirds and the happy laughter of carefree lovers, the more melismatic *eh-he-he...* and *ah-ha-ha...* seem more evocative of these sounds than less melismatic *von* or a possible English preposition or conjunction placed in this position.

Example 4 Op. 89, D 911, No. 11

J = 90



I dreamt a - bout fo - rests and mea - dows and chat - ter - some birdsong me - lee...
 ich träum - te von grü - nen Wie - sen, von lä - bli - chem Wo - gel - ge - schrei... von...
 of kis - sing and ca - res - sing, and rap - tu - rous care-free de - light...
 von Her - zen und... von Küs - sen, von Won - ne und Se - lig - keit... von...

Repetition, variation and expansion

In their study of factors affecting the intelligibility of the sung language, Johnson et al. also empirically investigated the effect of repetition in relation to an extensively studied area of psycholinguistics known as the ‘repetition priming effect’. Limiting their enquiry to the effect of single-word repetition on the intelligibility of the text, the authors observed that immediate repetition, in which the same word appears in successive trial, increases intelligibility, whereas delayed repetition, where the same word appears with a single intervening trial involving an unrelated word, had no appreciable effect on the intelligibility of sung language [9].

In setting Müller’s poems to music, Schubert makes extensive use of repetition [2], whether of words or phrases within a line, single lines,

multiple lines or whole stanzas, which results in a significant increase in both the overall number of poetic lines and the length of some of the lines. Moreover, while in most cases Schubert is content simply to repeat Müller's phrases and lines in their entirety, in some cases he applies variation, sometimes expanding on Müller's meaning in doing so. This presents an interesting challenge for a translator who wishes to remain maximally faithful to the form and content of both Müller and Schubert. Should Schubert's tendency to vary and expand the textual phrase be reduced in order to stay more faithful to Müller? Or, if accepting the validity of Schubert's variation-and-expansion approach, is there any good reason not to go further in varying and expanding into the parameters of the new language and associated cultural context where it is possible musically?

Following Schubert's example, as well as that of the legendary Russian translator of poetry Samuil Marshak [3], the present author took a number of opportunities to further vary and expand on Müller's phrases and lines in spots where repetition (and/or variation and expansion) was involved in their original musical setting. This kind of variation-and-expansion approach can be seen not only as a stylistic feature, but also as a means of overcoming such problems of translation which may tend to be solved in the context of prosaic texts (where strict rhythmic constraints do not apply) by using paraphrasis⁹. In other words, in some spots where it was not possible to find a line-by-line solution some of the connotative lacunae were carried forward periphrastically into the repeated lines and reintroduced there in the form of variation and/or expansion. In the following discussion, Müller's original German lines are represented in *italics*, Schubert's repetitions in plain text and the present author's English variations and expansions in **bold**.

In the first verse of "Sweet Dreams", for example, Schubert's repetition of the mother's notion of marriage is expanded to reveal the implicit – and disapproving – presence of the father (to whom Bostridge refers in terms of "absent dramatic personae" [2]):

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Das Mädchen sprach von Liebe,</i> | The girl showed admiration; |
| <i>Die Mutter gar von Eh</i> | Her mother said we'd wed; |
| Das Mädchen sprach von Liebe, | Returned infatuation; |
| Die Mutter gar von Eh | Her father wished me dead! |

In verse 2, the couplet quoted below could have been adequately translated by using a standard cliché of song writing, such as those featured in Cat Stevens' *Moonshadow* or Van Morrison's *Moondance*. Expansion of this image, rather than simple repetition of it, produced:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Es zieht ein Mondenschatten</i> | My only true companions, |
| <i>Als mein Gefährte mit,</i> | Moon-shadows dart and flit |
| Es zieht ein Mondenschatten | Through eerie glades and canyons |
| Als mein Gefährte mit, | As cloud and shade permit. |

In the third verse, the declaration concerning the essentially free nature of love – again, essentially presenting standard poetastic fare – was expanded in English within the overall poetic schema of the song to note its possible converse, i.e. attachment to property. It should be noted that, in this case, a small quantum of Müller's and Schubert's semantic meaning ('from one to another') has been sacrificed:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Die Liebe liebt das Wandern</i> | For love was born to wander – |
| <i>Gott hat sie so gemacht</i> | It's how things have to be |
| <i>Von einem zu dem andern.</i> | All riches made to squander. |
| Gott hat sie so gemacht | It's how things have to be! |

Schubert's obeisance to the norms of German versification does not always imply similar formal constructions in English. In repeating the following line towards the end of *Die Wetterfahne*, Schubert may have felt that dropping was would not be in conformance with these norms, whereas 'was I' in English, which takes up an extra quaver in the anacrusis of the first iteration of the line, certainly does not require to be repeated in the second (and would create a serious rhythmic disturbance, reducing singability, if attempted):

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Was fragen sie nach meinen Schmerzen?</i> | Was I just another of her playthings? |
| Was fragen sie nach meinen Schmerzen? | Just another of her playthings? |

Example 5

Op. 89, D 911, No. 2

♩ = 80

Was I just a - no - ther of her play - things? Just a - no - ther of her play - things?
 Was fra - gen sie nach mei - ne Schmer - zen? was fra - gen sie nach mei - ne Schmer - zen?

In "Frozen Inside" (*Erstarrung*), which has an ABCAB strophic structure, we see an example in the 'B' stanza of Schubert's repetition of Müller's

text *die Erde* at the level of the phrase within the unit of the line. In the case of the English translation, ‘the earth’ bears repeating twice.

Mit meinen heißen Tränen, With my hot tears to penetrate
Bis ich die Erde, die Erde The earth, the earth, **the earth**
seh’! below.

In the ‘C’ section, a more intricate pattern emerges in which Schubert repeats lines 3 and 4 in lines 5 and 6 and then repeats line 1 and 2 in lines 7 and 8. This palindromic approach fits well into the overall symmetry of the song, in which the ‘C’ section is sandwiched between two layers of ‘A’ and ‘B’; thus, the flowers slumbering under the snow can be seen as the ‘kernel’ or central image of the song:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Wo find' ich eine Blüte,</i> | Where can I find a flower, |
| <i>Wo find' ich grünes Gras?</i> | Where do I see green grass? |
| <i>Die Blumen sind erstorben,</i> | The flowers are all slumbering, |
| <i>Der Rasen sieht so blaß.</i> | The lawn a white morass. |
| <i>Die Blumen sind erstorben,</i> | The flowers are all slumbering, |
| <i>Der Rasen sieht so blaß.</i> | The lawn a white morass. |
| <i>Wo find' ich eine Blüte,</i> | Where can I find a flower, |
| <i>Wo find' ich grünes Gras?</i> | Where do I see green grass? |

In the concluding B section, Schubert applies his own variation, substituting *erfrozen* (‘frozen’) for the similar-sounding *erstorben* (‘dead’) on the repetition. This presents an opportunity to further vary and expand to supply some otherwise missing nuances in the translation and set up the final lines for delivery with a suitable rhetorical peroration:

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Mein Herz ist wie erstorben,</i> | My heart is like those flowers, |
| <i>Kalt starrt ihr Bild darin;</i> | All shrivelled up within; |
| <i>Schmilzt je das Herz mir wieder,</i> | But when the Spring shall come at last |
| <i>Fließt auch ihr Bild, ihr Bild dahin!</i> | They'll grow and blossom in here again! |
| <i>Mein Herz ist wie erfroren,</i> | My heart is like an icicle, |
| <i>Kalt starrt ihr Bild darin;</i> | All frozen up within; |
| <i>Schmilzt je das Herz mir wieder,</i> | But when the Spring doth come at last |
| <i>Fließt auch ihr Bild, ihr Bild dahin!</i> | It melts, and blossoms, once more, within – |
| <i>Ihr Bild dahin!</i> | Her form again! |

In “Linden Tree” (*Der Lindenbaum*), the song described by Thomas Mann as being about “nothing

but death” [12], the line *Hier find'st du deine Ruh’!* (‘Here may you find your repose’), which first appears as quoted sylvan speech in the special (present) subjunctive mood¹⁰ at the end of the fourth stanza, is echoed three times in the sixth and last stanza in the general (or past) subjunctive¹¹: *Du fändest Ruhe dort!* Given the relative awkwardness of conveying these different subjunctive moods in scanned English verse (‘there might you have found your repose’ is a possible ‘literal’ translation of the second variant), a variation-and-expansion approach was employed, including repeating a line from stanza 4 that is not repeated in Schubert’s stanza 6 structure:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Nun bin ich manche Stunde</i> | Time has flowed since that encounter |
| <i>Entfernt von jenem Ort,</i> | And miles that now interpose, |
| <i>Und immer hör' ich's rauschen:</i> | But still I hear that whispering: |
| <i>Du fändest Ruhe dort!</i> | Here may you find your repose! |
| <i>Nun bin ich manche Stunde</i> | Since then for hours been wandering |
| <i>Entfernt von jenem Ort,</i> | Long miles that interpose... |
| <i>Und immer hör' ich's rauschen:</i> | Come, o weary journeyman – |
| <i>Du fändest Ruhe dort!</i> | Here may you find repose! |
| <i>Du fändest Ruhe dort!</i> | Here may you find repose! |

In “Torrent” (*Wasserflut*), Schubert repeats the fourth line of every stanza to create a form of refrain standard to both German and English versification norms. In English, however, it was possible to repeat the definite article in one stanza to create an attractive rhythmic effect at the same time as drawing the listener’s attention to the singular and undivided nature of what is symbolised by ‘ocean’. (It should be noted that while Müller-Schubert may imply ‘ocean’ in this song, it is not explicitly stated; however, the image does appear explicitly in related contexts elsewhere in the cycle, e.g. “Will-o’-the-wisp”):

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Nimmt dich bald das Bächlein auf.</i> | Into the stream and ocean below |
| <i>Nimmt dich bald das Bächlein auf.</i> | Into the stream and the ocean below. |

In expanding Müller’s fifth and last four-line stanza in *Auf dem Flusse* (“Upon the Water”) into an eleven-line concluding stanza, Schubert employs a complex repetitive structure in which

line 5 repeats line 4, line 6 repeats line 1, line 7 repeats line 2, line 8 repeats line 3, and lines 9, 10 and 11 again reprise line 4. The insistent repetition of this final line, in which sibilants and fricatives are similarly combined in the original German and translated English lines, becomes almost incantatory in its invocation of the desired change of state (from brittle Winter to liquid Spring, from inauthentic existence to authentic Being), building on the spell-like visual effect of the graphic images inscribed in the ice:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Mein Herz, in diesem Bache</i> | My heart, upon the water |
| <i>Erkennst du nun dein Bild?</i> | Do you see your image now? |
| <i>Ob's unter seiner Rinde</i> | Will your hard integumentum |
| <i>Wohl auch so reißend schwillt?</i> | Now shatter with the spring? |
| Wohl auch so reißend schwillt? | Will it shatter with the spring? |
| Mein Herz, in diesem Bache | My heart, upon the water |
| Erkennst du nun dein Bild? | Do you see your image now? |
| Ob's unter seiner Rinde | Will your hard integumentum |
| Wohl auch so reißend schwillt? | Now shatter with the spring? |
| Wohl auch so reißend schwillt? | Will it shatter with the spring? |
| Wohl auch so reißend schwillt? | Now shatter with the spring? |

In “Retrospection” (*Rückblick*), which has a strophic ABCDA strophic structure, Schubert’s simple repetition of the narrator’s recollection of the shining eyes of his former lover in the contrasting ‘D’ section is varied and expanded in English to distinguish between a simple, directly-recalled image using a past participle construction (the **act** of retrospection), and a more emotionally-involved ‘brimming over’ (psychological) **effect** (of retrospection) using the present participle of the verb ‘transmit’:

| | |
|--|--|
| Und ach, zwei Mädchenaugen glühten. | And oh, two bright eyes, all consuming, |
| – Da war's gescheh'n um dich, Gesell! | Transmitted atoms of delight. |
| Und ach, zwei Mädchenaugen glühten. | And oh, those bright eyes, all consuming, |
| – Da war's gescheh'n um dich, Gesell! | Transmitting atoms of delight. |

In the final ‘A’ stanza, Schubert employs extensive repetition to emphasise the rat-like nature of the psychological state of retrospection. Like a rat caught in a maze, the narrator observes himself returning again and again to mentally assume the same position with respect to the house of his former love. Schubert’s fourth and final repetition of the

final line in Müller’s fifth stanza has the character of a peroration. Here all repetitions have been formally replicated in English to produce an almost identical rhetorical effect:

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Kommt mir der Tag in die gedanken, | Whenever that day comes to mind |
| Möcht' ich noch einmal rückwärts seh'n. | I must this notion entertain |
| Möcht' ich zurücke wieder wanken, | In retrospection I'm inclined |
| Vor ihrem Hause stille steh'n. | To stand before that house again |
| Kommt mir der Tag in die gedanken, | Whenever that day comes to my mind |
| Möcht' ich noch einmal rückwärts seh'n. | I must this notion entertain |
| Möcht' ich zurücke wieder wanken, | In retrospection I'm inclined |
| Vor ihrem Hause stille steh'n. | To stand before that house again |
| Möcht' ich zurücke wieder wanken, | In retrospection I'm inclined |
| Vor ihrem Hause stille steh'n. | To stand before that house again |
| Vor ihrem Hause stille steh'n. | To stand before that house again. |

In the rhythmically-complex “Will-o’-the-wisp” (*Irrlicht*), the elusive and treacherous ghostly atmospheric light, represented musically by dotted semiquavers, demisemiquavers and triplets, is characterised in the text in the form of repetition, stated first in a strongly-accentuated trochaic meter and second in a smoother, more rapid syllabic flicker. Here, rhythmic substitution and expansion in the English translation was able to further accentuate the rapidly flickering effect:

Alles eines Irrlichts Spiel! All deceptive plays of light!
Alles eines Irrlichts Spiel! All **are just** deceptive plays of light!

Example 6 Op. 89, D 911, No. 9

In “Dream of Spring” (*Frühlingstraum*), which has a strophic ABCABC structure, Schubert uses repetition in the ‘C’ stanzas to reprise lines 1 and 2 of Müller’s stanzas in lines 3 and 4, also repeating Müller’s line 4 in line 7. These repetitions were varied and expanded in English as follows:



Doch an den Fensterscheiben, But, verdant, at the window,
Wer malte die Blätter da? Those fronds still intertwined.
Doch an den Fensterscheiben, So verdant, at the window,
Wer malte die Blätter da? **Still green shoots** intertwined.
Ihr lacht wohl über den Have pity upon the dreamer,
Träumer,
Der Blumen im Winter sah? To illusion to be consigned,
Der Blumen im Winter sah? To illusion to **thus** be
 consigned.

The “Corbie” (*Die Krähe*) presents an example of metaphoric adaptation in an attempt to overcome what might otherwise have been a risk in contemporary English of collapse of the ironic register and consequent regress into sentimentality. In the concluding stanza of the original German, the narrator rhetorically asks his corvine stalker if it will finally show him an example of faithfulness unto death. Here Müller’s black humour compares the faithless beloved unfavourably to the carrion bird; however, the clear implication – and source of dramatic irony – is that the crow is only following him because it senses his isolation and impending death and is thus waiting for an opportunity to peck his eyes out. In choosing to substitute a slightly different poetic schema, in which the narrator is no longer subtly blaming his ex- for her unfaithfulness, but now actively considering his own role in his predicament, variation and expansion are used to elaborate this concluding thought:

Nun, es wird nicht weit mehr Further can I hardly go
geh'n
An dem Wanderstabe. On this path to stumble.
Krähe, laß mich endlich seh'n Corbie, shall I this way know
Treue bis zum Grabe! How to be more humble?
Krähe, laß mich endlich seh'n Corbie, **help me** this way know
Treue bis zum Grabe! How to be more humble!

The theme of abandonment, prevalent throughout the cycle, is represented in “Milestone” (*Der Wegweiser*), which has an ABCC strophic structure. Here, in the ‘B’ stanza, although the reflexive verb *sich treiben* is not directly translated by either of the English passive verb constructions ‘exiled to’ or ‘abandoned to’, these interpretations are certainly implicit elsewhere in the song’s text. Therefore, the choice was taken to vary and expand in English in order to try to better capture the implied meaning:

Habe ja doch nichts begangen, I am not a common felon
Daß ich Menschen sollte To endure such loneliness
scheu'n, –
Daß ich Menschen sollte To endure such loneliness
scheu'n, –
Welch ein törichtes Verlangen Yet to such a fate befallen,
Treibt mich in die Wüstenei'n? Exiled to the wilderness –
Treibt mich in die Wüstenei'n? **Abandoned** to the wilderness!

Finally, in “Bravado” (*Mut!*), which has an AAB strophic structure, Schubert’s repetition of all four lines of Müller’s final stanza in the concluding ‘B’ section permits a complex variation-and-expansion approach to develop the Nietzschean notion of the ‘death of God’ [16] alongside a consideration of Heidegger’s concept of ‘thrownness’ or *Geworfenheit* [7]. While, of course, Schubert and Müller preceded both famous German philosophers (Schubert died 16 years before Nietzsche was born), these important concepts were clearly already in the process of gestation during the Early Romantic period:

Lustig in die Welt hinein Cheerfully, into the world,
Gegen Wind und Wetter! Scorning wind and weather;
Will kein Gott auf Erden sein, God is dead, yet we’ve been
 hurled,
Sind wir selber Götter! Dashing, hell-for-leather;
Lustig in die Welt hinein **Merrily, into the world,**
Gegen Wind und Wetter! **Scorning wind and weather;**
Will kein Gott auf Erden sein, **God cares not that we’ve been**
hurled:
Sind wir selber Götter! **Let’s be gods together!**

Conclusion

Unavoidable trade-offs in song translation between singability, intelligibility and faithfulness-to-source have been discussed on the example of a contemporary English translation of Schubert’s *Winterreise* in terms of rhythmic substitution, prosodic-musical stress alignment and melisma-versus-syllabism, as well as repetition, variation and expansion. While the resultant text is demonstrably singable and intelligible [6], choices taken during the translation process that reduce faithfulness-to-source may raise legitimate questions as to the extent to which “Winter Journeyman” should be properly considered as a ‘translation’ of *Winterreise* at all; instead, it may be thought of as an ‘adaptation’ (or ‘adaptive translation’). However, due to

complex issues concerning the relationship between linguistic form and content, it is also possible that such questions cannot be conclusively resolved one way or the other [8; 17]. Ultimately, perhaps only bilingual speakers of both source and target languages, who also have an intimate knowledge of the musical and historical backgrounds of the work in question, are qualified to make such a (subjective)

judgement. Nevertheless, audiences may respond to sung texts – whether translated or original – on their own terms: such a response is likely to be subjectively experienced in terms of the perceived ‘authenticity’ (or otherwise) of the sung text. This question concerning the perceived authenticity of sung (translated) texts will be explored in detail in a future work.

NOTES

¹ Müller’s poems were originally published under the title *Die Winterreise* (“The Winter Journey”), whereas Schubert’s song cycle was published under the title *Winterreise* (“Winter Journey”).

² Rhythm and meter in English poetry. URL: <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/meter.html> (14.05.2018).

³ Tuplets. URL: <https://musescore.org/en/handbook/tuplets>.

⁴ E.g. ‘wed’ / ‘dead’ – one-syllable words, or words that end on a stressed syllable.

⁵ A stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, e.g., ‘landing’ / ‘standing’.

⁶ One or more unstressed notes before the first bar line of a piece or passage.

⁷ Passages where a single syllable is sustained across more than one note [9].

⁸ One note or musical tone per syllable.

⁹ Translation Techniques: Paraphrasing. URL: <http://translathoughts.com/2015/06/translation-techniques-paraphrasing/>.

¹⁰ The Special Subjunctive Mood (der Konjunktiv I). URL: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~deutsch/Grammatik/Subjunctive/KonjunktivI.html> (14.05.2018).

¹¹ The General Subjunctive Mood (der Konjunktiv II). URL: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~deutsch/Grammatik/Subjunctive/KonjunktivII.html> (14.05.2018).

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